

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

May 19, 1999

LB 652, 878

list is as follows: Senator Suttle, followed by Senators Schmitt, Coordsen, Dwite Pedersen, Senator Wehrbein, and Senator Hudkins. Senator Suttle.

SENATOR SUTTLE: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. You probably think that we are a broken record and you've heard all this before and you probably wonder why we're doing this. Senator Thompson has, and others of us, have been told that the appropriations just simply weren't there this year to look at these kinds of upgrades and doing a better job at our juvenile facilities, and that's the reason she introduced (LB) 652, which would increase the cigarette tax that would address these buildings. And that was the reason that the Appropriations Committee was not approached during their Health and Human Services Department over...looking over that department. On the yellow page I think it's good to remember that these are just bricks and mortar. We're not talking about operation and when we talk about bricks and mortar, we talk about 10 percent of the cost of a facility. The 90 percent is the operation and that's where all the money comes...needs to come. We all...the Governor also spent a lot of time saying what he was going to do with Dunbar cottage at Geneva, and no matter how much Band-Aids and caulking and everything else that you do to this building, you've still got a 73-year-old building that is not...does not abide by the rules that should be governed by a facility for juveniles. You can't see in. They don't have access to bathrooms at night. It's on three floors. There are just super many things. If it were staffed the way it should be staffed, and it isn't, there should be 5 employees year-round, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. And if we paid them \$25,000 a year, that would be \$125,000 a year just for salary. And that goes away real quickly when you start staffing facilities that...that...in the proper way. And I just wanted to point that out. I got some information from Douglas County of the kind of kids that we are talking about. In Douglas County alone last year and this year they have seen 1,773 kids in categories there where parental home, and foster family, emergency shelters, group homes, treatment facilities, detention centers, or the Youth Rehabilitation Treatment Center. In Lancaster, they had 658, and in Sarpy they had 347. These were also abuse and neglect status offenders, but also misdemeanors, felonies and other types of adjudications that occurred. And